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Epistle from the Yearly Meeting
of Friends · 1831.

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EPISTLE
FROM THE
YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,
HELD IN PHILADELPHIA,
TO THE
YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,
HELD IN LONDON.
ALSO,
AN EPISTLE
FROM
THE YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,
HELD IN NEW YORK,
ADDRESSED TO THEIR SUBORDINATE MEETINGS.

SECOND EDITION.

DUBLIN:
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At. Bsp. ...

EPISTLES, &c.

From the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in Philadelphia, by Adjournments, from the 12th of 4th month, to the 17th of the same inclusive, 1830. To the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London.

DEAR FRIENDS,

YOUR communication, under cover of a letter from Josiah Forster to the Clerk of this Meeting, was duly received—and, notwithstanding the obstacles you have placed in the way of our communion, we have thought it right, on mature deliberation, again to address you in the language of brotherly love, with desires, that on further reflection, you may be induced to open the channel of Christian intercourse between us.

On looking over the annals of our religious society, it is pleasing to perceive, that for more than one hundred and forty years, the Yearly Meeting of London, and that of Pennsylvania, preserved the most cordial relations; during this time an affectionate interchange of their views and sentiments was maintained, to their mutual edification and comfort, binding them more firmly together in the bonds of Gospel fellow-

ship. Greatly desiring to preserve such an intercourse uninterrupted, this meeting, in the 4th month 1828, addressed to you an affectionate epistle, in which we adverted to the division which had taken place in the Yearly Meeting of Philadelphia, and stated our views of the causes which had led to that event: we did this in the hope, that by making you acquainted with our case, as we understood it ourselves, you might be preserved from any improper bias, and be induced to suspend your decision on the subject, until time and a further investigation of circumstances, might enable you to form an impartial judgment. By your answer to this friendly effort for the preservation of harmony between us, we perceive that on the *ex parte* evidence of a committee, acting as the representatives of a small minority of Friends in this section of our country, you have pronounced us "separatists," and have declared it the judgment of your Meeting, "neither to read, nor accept the communication" we sent you.

We would affectionately request you to review the course you have adopted on this occasion, to consider whether it comports with the precepts of the Christian religion, the practice of early Friends, or even with common justice, to condemn your brethren and sisters *unheard*. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," Matt. vii. 12: this is *the positive precept of Christ*, whose friends we

are, only so far as we do whatsoever he commands us. By this act, if you persevere in the course you have prescribed, you will cut yourselves off from religious communion with upwards of eighteen thousand of your fellow professors of the Gospel of Christ, within this one Yearly Meeting! You will separate yourselves from a religious community, whose aim is, to exalt the standard of truth and righteousness—whose ardent desire is, to promote “peace on earth, and good will to man.”

We are aware, dear friends, that our opponents have pronounced us *infidels* and *deists*! They have said, we have departed from the Christian faith, and renounced the religion of our worthy predecessors in the truth! Nothing is easier than to make such charges as these; but in the present case, we are happily assured, that nothing is harder than to prove them. We are not sensible of any dereliction on our part, from the principles laid down by our blessed Lord; the history of the birth, life, acts, death, and resurrection of the holy Jesus, as in the volume of the book it is written of him, we reverently believe: we are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, because “It is the power of God, unto salvation, to all them that believe;” neither do we hesitate to acknowledge the divinity of its author, because we know from living experience, that he is “the power of God, and the wisdom of God,” that under the present glorious dispen-

sation, He is the one holy principle of divine life and light, the unlimited word of grace and truth, which only can build us up in the true faith, and give us an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Nor are we sensible of any departure from the faith and principles of our primitive Friends: we are not ignorant that on some points, of a speculative nature, they had different views, and expressed themselves diversely; but, notwithstanding this was the case, such were the aboundings of the love of God, and of one another, that these differences did not interrupt the excellent harmony that existed among them. In the fundamental principles of the Christian faith, "The light of Christ within, as God's gift for man's salvation," and which, as William Penn declares, "Is the root of the goodly tree of doctrines which grew and branched out from it," *they were all united*, and in that, which united them, we are united with them; believing in the *same fundamental principles*, and in all *the blessed doctrines*, which grew from it as their root, both as they are laid down in the Scriptures of truth, and in their writings; desiring, above all things, the growth and advancement of this principle in ourselves, and in the world at large.

The peculiar testimonies which the Society of Friends have borne from the beginning, are near and dear to us; not only because of the blessed root from which they spring, but because we be-

lieve, that, as they are faithfully supported, they will be a means of advancing that glorious day, spoken of by the Lord's prophet, "When the people shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit, every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid," Mic. iv. 4.

The charges brought against *us*, by our opposers, to injure and invalidate our character as a Christian people, are the same that were preferred against our primitive Friends, and we apprehend upon the same grounds. In that day, those who, like Diotrophes, "loved to have the pre-eminence," could not bear to see a people rising up, and bearing testimony to the truth and practical importance of that humbling doctrine, "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren," Matt. xxiii. 8. We do not believe that the divisions which have appeared amongst us, had their origin so much in difference of opinion on doctrinal points, as in a disposition, apparent in some, *to exercise an oppressive authority in the church.* These, in our meetings for discipline, although a small minority of the whole, assumed the power to direct a course of measures, painful to the feelings, and contrary to the deliberate judgment of their brethren: thus, *the few usurped a power*

over the many, subversive of our established order, and destructive to the peace and harmony of society. After long and patient forbearance, in the hope that our opposing brethren might see the impropriety of such a course, the great body of the Yearly Meeting saw no way to regain a state of tranquillity, but by a disconnection with those who had produced, and were promoting such disorders amongst us.

After much painful exercise on our part, through all which we had abundant evidence of the extension of divine regard, affording strength proportionate to the labour of the day, such a disconnection was effected; and with gratitude to our heavenly Father, we are now enabled to say, that harmony and brotherly love abounds amongst us; under the feelings of which, we have often experienced the divine presence to be the crown and diadem of our solemn assemblies.

By official accounts (which we believe to be nearly correct,) from all parts of this Yearly Meeting, it appears that, out of *twenty-five thousand* adults and children, which composed it at the time of the division, about *eighteen thousand* remains in connection with this body. We refer you, for further and more particular information on the state of the division, to the annexed statement.

Finally, brethren and sisters, we are concerned to express, in the language of the apostle, the desire for ourselves, and for you, "That we may

give all diligence to add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, *knowledge*; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, *charity*; for, if these things be in us, and abound, they will make us, that we shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

With the salutation of love, we remain your friends.

Signed by direction, and on behalf of said
Meeting, by

JOHN COMLY,

Clerk to the Men's Meeting.

LUCRETIA MOTT,

Clerk to the Women's Meeting.

Statement, shewing the number of Members belonging to the respective Quarterly Meetings, composing the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in Philadelphia; and also the number of those usually called Orthodox.

Quarterly Meetings.	Friends.			Total Friends.	Orthodox, so called.			Total Orthodox.
	Males.	female	Minors		Males.	female	Minors	
Philadelphia.	561	762	1074	2397	536	899	1008	2443
Abington.....	675	928	1226	2829	65	99	157	321
Bucks.....	683	973	1175	2831	118	191	180	489
Concord	655	889	1029	2573	189	285	316	790
Caln.....	228	264	429	921	150	186	221	557
Western.....	566	715	1015	2296	119	161	174	454
Southern.....	129	181	191	501	8	10	12	30
Burlington....	262	381	406	1049	196	345	259	800
Haddonfield..	200	238	383	821	169	295	325	789
Salem.....	285	386	567	1238	75	129	94	298
Shrewsbury and Rahway	174	246	265	685	42	75	46	163
Total...	4418	5963	7760	18141	1667	2675	2792	7134

There are 144 Men, 159 Women, and 133 Children —total, 436, not included in the above account, having withdrawn from Meetings for Discipline; and from one small Monthly Meeting (nearly all Friends), *no returns* have yet been received.

Of 145 Meeting Houses, within the limits of this Yearly Meeting, 102 remain in the possession of Friends; 23 are in the possession of those called Orthodox; and 20 are yet in the possession and occupancy of both.

Our Orthodox Friends, as they call themselves, in making *their* statement of the number of their Members, by counting the minor children of our Friends with them, would probably vary materially from the above statement; but the unfairness of this mode of calculating their numbers is easily perceived—in no other way, it is believed, would they essentially differ from the statement here made.

The Yearly Meeting of Baltimore, previous to the separation, consisted of from ten to twelve thousand members; of whom a small number, called Orthodox, not exceeding about three hundred, including children, have separated from it.

By a letter recently received from America, it appears that, last Autumn, the Monthly Meeting of Muncy, a branch of Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting, separated, and that about one third of the members withdrew from the Meeting with the Orthodox party.

1st Mo. 1831.

EPISTLE,

From the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in New York, by adjournments, from the 24th of the 5th month, to the 28th of the same, inclusive, 1830.

To our subordinate Meetings.

BELOVED FRIENDS,

MANY of our minds having been tendered under the renewed visitations of Divine goodness, mercifully extended at this season; it was thought due to our absent brethren, to give them a short summary of the exercise of the Meeting.

We have acceptably had the company, at this time, of many dear friends from other Yearly Meetings, and have received satisfactory Epistles from those of Philadelphia, Baltimore, Ohio, and Indiana. From some other Yearly Meetings, that have heretofore corresponded with us, no Epistle has been received. The cause of this omission we believe has originated in misrepresentation, and ought not to alienate our minds from an affectionate regard towards our distant friends. Notwithstanding the estrangement is, on their part, voluntary, we regard them as brethren, placing the same dependence on the all-sufficiency of the Spirit of Christ manifested in the soul, and pledged to the support of the same peculiar testimonies. Under this impression, we desire the members of

this Yearly Meeting may consider the vital import of the injunction, "Let brotherly love continue." As this Divine love is abode in, it will not fail to produce its own fruits, peace of mind in ourselves, and harmony in society. The deficiencies in our several meetings, as spread before us in the answers to the Queries, occasioned an exercise of feeling, which gave rise to much salutary counsel: and, dear friends, may we all be awakened to a renewed attention to the witness of truth in our own hearts. Were this our individual concern, we should be brought to see the excellency of our profession, and the importance of a strict adherence to our ancient testimonies—and these deficiencies would cease to exist amongst us. Then we should be enabled to go forth with boldness, to proclaim the goodness of the Lord, and the purity of his divine precepts, divesting them of *that* with which the wisdom of this world has enveloped them. In this day of creaturely activity, Friends, if not constantly on the watch, may be drawn into active measures with some of the numerous societies which may have originated in the strength of the human will: and we desire that our members, every where, would rightly consider the tendency of these things, lest they be supporting that which is at variance with the Divine principle, which we profess, and strengthening a hireling Ministry.

The long-protracted oppression of our brethren of the African race, calls for our conti-

nued sympathy; and since some of their faithful advocates have been recently removed from works to rewards, it becomes an interesting question, whether our testimony on their behalf shall decline or rise with renewed energy. The public mind is, we trust, awakening to a sense of the rights of this people; and it is deemed worthy of individual inquiry, whether we could not more generally, by abstaining as way might open from the use of the products of slave-labour, consistently and powerfully plead their cause.

The rising generation have been objects of our tender solicitude, believing that the great Parent is extending the arm of his divine power, to gather them into a more intimate acquaintance with himself. O! that they may yield obedience to the tender impressions which are at times evidently made upon their youthful minds: then would our Society shine forth in its ancient brightness, and this testimony be produced in the minds of many—"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined."

Signed by direction, and on behalf of the Meeting,
SAMUEL MOTT, *Clerk.*

The number of the members within the Yearly Meeting of New York, was taken by direction of their Meeting for Sufferings; and from the records of that meeting it appears, that the whole number, *adults and children*, is 19,262, of whom 5,921 belong *to the party called Orthodox.*



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